

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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An Educational Group

UP THOSE 48 STEPS

We had had about four good years at the Old Grand Opera House on Clark Street when we received the notice that it was to be razed for the new Civic Center. Those four years in the Old Grand served a purpose, despite its impracticability. On July 11, of 1949 we became excited about the Old Chess Club on Madison Street as a possible place to move into. On the 20th of July we signed a lease for four years and eight months at a reasonable rent. (We had no surplus of money and had to borrow to move.)

The work we faced to make those two floors a proper studio would have discouraged Paul Bunyan. Before thinking of moving we had to teach the Summer Course and we both taught in Boston for the Boston Teachers Society. Coming back to Chicago August 10th to break up the old place and moving our sparse belongings four blocks away - mostly on foot carrying the smaller objects. All the pupils joined in and helped willingly. For over a month our ever gallant crew labored removing wall paper - removing dozens of coats of paint from window sills - scrubbing dirty corners - a truck load of rubbish was taken away - miles of wires were torn from the walls and scrubbing that beautiful tile floor again and again. All that before the painters, plasterers, carpenters and electricians came in to finish the place. Not until September 17th were we able to hold the first class. There was still three months work to be done. The amazing thing was the enthusiasm of the pupils giving of their much needed help. Faced with this colossal amount of work, today, I think we would turn the other way.

It was not until two years later that the real estate people built the beautiful studio floor for us costing them five grand and us one - today the bill would be nearer twenty grand. From this time on things began to brighten up for us.

Today, 28 years later, and that much older we were faced with another lease. With the changing loop district (Madison Street has gone

mad with new developments) the no-value of the money - the great increase in running expenses - added to our own advancing years it was not easy to make a decision. What really turned the trick was thinking about all the young talent we have nurtured up to this point. We just could not turn them loose at this time. We would like to see them through to fame and fortune as others we have had in the past.

The studio at 185 West Madison has seen many dancers come and go up and down those 48 stairs. They are scattered to the four corners of the world. We certainly have not become rich in money but rich in memories. We get by because we have lived frugally - with no cars - no color TV - no fur coats - and could we really use one this year!

ART - the only faithful mistress - forever young - immortal - the fountain of all pure joys, closed to the multitude, but freely open to the elect, the precious food which makes a man like unto a God.

- D'Annunzio

"The horror of that moment" - the King went on, "I will never - never forget"! "You will, though" - the Queen said, "If you don't make a memorandum of it".

THE YEAR 1978

To evaluate the past year - '78 I must find a place away from the present. So I retire to my 'castle' on North Avenue resplendent with 45 pictures on its walls. Prints of Inness - Chirico - Gauguin - Von Gogh - Roualt - Michaelangelo - Rodin - Ferrari - Carpeaux - Giorgione - Sorolla - Rousseau and Veneziano grace my walls. All of these in some way represent a consanguinity with serenity - nostalgia - man's relation to Flora - Fauna and Avifauna - youth - homo sapiens and religion. Art to be lived with must supply the tranquility that is not a part of my daily life.

With this blessed quiet I scan my daily journal which contains most of what was important to me during the past year. In summing up the year the columnists found it difficult to say much good about '78.

The first thing anyone talks about is the weather. The past year was one that Chicagoans will not soon forget. It was truly an abominable year right up to June. But one must admit that true Chicagoans go about their business regardless of how unpleasant it is. In the school we had wonderful attendance all through the worst weather and when it became good - they let down and sickness took over.

The grim reaper each year takes away some of our favorite people that are hard to replace. This year in the National field - Golda Meier; Artists - Giorio Chirico and Norman Rockwell; Anthropologist - Margaret Mead; and in the theatrical field - Charles Boyer, Edgar Bergen, Jacques Brel, Tamar Karsavina and Kathryn Litz.

What I wrote about 1977 could almost be repeated for '78. The elements seemed to have gone mad with freaky weather, storms, floods, drought and earthquakes all creating a great amount of misery in the world. But in the crime areas '78 had an original twist into irrational religious and sex cults. It is extremely hard to understand the human acquiescence to this insane leadership. It is so shockingly senseless one might suspect we are back in the dark ages.

As for new books this year there was little to excite one. I finally caught up with Kenneth Clark's "Civilization" and found it engrossing because I was familiar with so much art he wrote about from our travels in Europe. For reading pleasure I prefer biographies and did enjoy Agnes De Mille's "Where the Wings Grow" - Agatha Christie's "Biography" - Simone Sinoret's "Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be" - John McCabe's "Charlie Chaplin" and reread the marvelous "The Passionate Pilgrim" by Lawrence and Elizabeth Hansen - and especially liked Robert Payne's "Leonardo" whose phenomenal genius was colossal. Steadily I have become more and more a Proust fan having read this year "The Germantes Way" and "Cities of the Plain". The balance of my reading was in rereading favorite books of Berenson, Gide, Camus, Hesse, Eisley and Marquez. Among the holiday gifts a book by Howard Frank Mosher "Where the Rivers Flow North" may well become a new favorite. Mosher is a new regional voice and a strong one.

Chicago's major love has always been music, from Thomas to Stock, to Reiner - to Guilini to Solti. We have become accustomed to the best. The Symphony supplies this rather regularly. A special Symphony program was the presentation of Roberto Gerhardt's oratorio "The Plague" based on the Camus book. It was harrowingly effective with the chorus being used as he agonized towns people with their anguished moans - furtive whispers and confused cries - all providing a dramatic contrast with the matter of fact tone of the Narrator. Other unique programs were the all Beethoven program with Leinsdoff conducting - Guilini's conducting of the Mozart concerto in C Minor with Sir Clifford Curzon at the piano - Carlos Kleiber's conducting of a Schubert and Beethoven program - these all with our superb Chicago Symphony orchestra. High on the list of our musical delights was all the Brahms Chamber music played during the year by the Fine Arts Quartet...the cream of the year. In voice recitals we were privileged to hear Aly Ameling, Hermann Prey and Barbara Hendericks all in rarified programs at the University of Chicago. The Lyric Opera was not up to its usual standard this season with only two exceptional performances - "Werther" and "Don Pasquale". "Lost Paradise" was notable only for the excellent choreography by John Butler for Dennis Wayne and Nancy Theusen. Penderecki's exasperating lengthy endurance without Wagner's rich talent for writing dramatic music made the evening very tedious.

The movies are enjoying a resurgence of popularity even at three and four dollar tickets. I'm told it is because the TV is so poor. Going to the movies so seldom I am more often disappointed than pleased. The highly popular and publicized "Saturday Nite Fever" to me was loathsome - as was "Close Encounters". They may be imaginative but they are also inane. As for 'Nite Fever' with its foul language and the pornographic aspects of the film I was appalled at the people who professed liking it. Two films that appealed to me as works of art were "Madam Rosa" and "Autumn Sonata". The French have a way, as Mae West did, of making a risque subject amusing and natural and not dirty for dirt's sake. Simone Signoret gave a superb performance in 'Rosa'. In the Swedish film "Autumn Sonata" the incredible Ingmar Bergman wrung the insides out of his cast - plus the audience. Ingrid Bergman gave the best performance of her life and I can understand all the raves about Liv Ullman after seeing her for the first time. The story is one embarrassingly close to many actual lives in the theatrical world with Ingrid Bergman playing the part of a successful concert pianist.

"The Turning Point" was in a class by itself and a historic event from the dance standpoint. Never before has dance been filmed from the dancer's viewpoint so magnificently. Aside from being (more or less) a true story of a family we hold dear at Stone Camryn it presented many superb dancers in a way one does not always see them on stage - and it had Leslie.

As for "Superman" it had the beguiling Christopher Reeve. In another ten years with pictures like this and with "Star Wars" and "Close Encounters" the next generation will be stone deaf. For sheer excitement Pearl White had it all over these films.

Two Heaven movies - "Heaven Can Wait" and "Days of Heaven" were superior entertainment. "Heaven Can Wait" was in every way a delight - good clean entertainment and amusing. "Days of Heaven" just missed being a great film but to my rancher's heart much of the direction disturbed me. Seeing hoards of people tramping through wheat fields and the sloppy binding and thrashing scenes - no farmer would allow.

For the amount of dance brought to Chicago this past season there was little of great interest. The most creative was John Butler's choreography for "Lost Paradise" for dancers Dennis Wayne and Nancy Theusen. Butler is an old hand at Adam and Eve but this seemed fresher. The 'Cain and Abel' section was extremely exciting. The Chicago Ballet's "Giselle" was worthy because of the delightful Noella Pontois (obviously there is a change in the French training). Of the many dancers brought here for the International Dance Festival Peter Schaufuss, Anna Marie Dybdal and Alexandra Radius stole all honors. I was only able to see one performance. Naomi Sorkin in her duo concert with Lawrence Rhodes at the Fermilab Theatre was a very special evening of beautiful dance. Three companies that held a high standard were the "Les Grand Ballets Canadiens" - the "Eliot Feld Company" and "The Dutch National Ballet". Each company presented interesting programs and danced with superior dancers. The Martha Graham Company continues to present the very best in modern. Naturally this is only a pittance of the dance brought to Chicago - if not mentioned, either I did not see them or was disappointed in what I saw - like the wasted evening with the superb Royal Ballet with a ballet like "Mayerling".

As an aside - the reason there is no Chicago Ballet and never will be one is that two Local groups of 'Society' women work their heads off for two outside companies - the "Robert Joffrey Ballet" and the "American Ballet Theatre". Think about it!

Stone Camryn Girls were having a good year - with DOLORES LIPINKSI as Ballet Mistress for the local "Nutcracker" - KAREN TIMS in the Netherlands Dans Theatre in the Jiri Kylian's ballets - NAOMI SORKIN in her Concerts - PEGGY LYMAN in the Martha Graham Dance Company - MARY RANDOLPH and KAY JOHNSON in the Eliot Feld Company - VANNESSA MERIA in the Lubeck Ballet Company - DIANE REILY in the Basil Ballet Company and LAUREN ROUSE and NANCY GLYNN in the Pittsburg Ballet.

We have always been proud of the boys who began with us and have gone out into the world to accomplish great things. JOHN NEUMEIER's success goes on and on but not without effort and boundless talent. In the acting field JAY DEVLIN and MICHAEL SHANNON have made important statements and are more grateful for their training than the dancers. Of the more recent dancers CHRISTOPHER ADAMS, SCOTT SCHLEXER, ADAM HEILMANN and JOHN SENNIS have made sound beginnings.